

The Asbury Journal 73/2: 8-9
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DOI: 10.7252/Journal.02.2018F.02

Introduction

On the State of the Old Testament: Essays in Review of Brent Strawn's The Old Testament is Dying

The essays highlighted in this volume, save one, are the product of a 2018 panel discussion of Brent A. Strawn's *The Old Testament is Dying* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017). It took place at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Conference for the Study of Religion (www.secsor.org), March 3 in Atlanta, Georgia. The idea for Strawn's book came from Robert Foster of the University of Georgia, and as I step back and consider how the project unfolded, I am pleased. Consequently, Foster deserves thanks for being perceptive enough to propose the idea.

Each of the contributors were chosen for a variety of reasons. Most importantly, at the time when invitations to contribute were sent out, each was associated with an institution in the southeast region. Second, each contributor was chosen for his or her ability to critically engage a facet of Professor Strawn's argument. Kimberly Bracken-Long has published widely on issues of homiletics and worship theory, and she is currently the editor of *Call to Worship*, a liturgical journal of the Presbyterian Church. Clinton Moyer has displayed an ability to insightfully analyze and critique arguments as well as develop avenues for further discussion, all while keeping his finger on the trends within the American Church and American religious discourse. Moyer is a Senior Fellow at Wake Forest School of Divinity. Murray Vasser is a Ph. D. Candidate at Asbury Theological Seminary. Specializing in New Testament studies, he was invited to contribute because Professor Strawn's thesis poses important implications for scripture as a whole.

Brad Haggard is a Ph. D. Student at Asbury Theological Seminary. He was invited to contribute to the journal because of his familiarity with the Church in Mexico, specifically the evangelical Church. Having taught and preached in a Mexican context, Haggard's perspective is important, for what Professor Strawn observes, at least as it is presented in the book, is a distinctly American problem. As

I see it, the most logical trajectory proceeding from Strawn's work on the state of the Old Testament is how much of what is observed in the American Church can be seen on the global scene. Is he observing an American phenomenon, or a global one? In a footnote, Strawn suggests that what he observes may go beyond the American Church. Haggard questions this in his response.

The sequence of essays here is largely the same as that of the SECSOR meeting. This portion opens with a *précise* designed to articulate the general contours of Strawn's presentation. Next, Bracken-Long's essay gives way to Vasser's, and then to Moyer's. Professor Strawn then responds in detail to Bracken-Long, Vasser, and Moyer. Haggard's essay concludes this portion of the journal.

I would be remiss not to thank Robert Danielson, the editor of *The Asbury Journal*, for his willingness to devote a volume to this topic. He was very gracious and highly receptive of my idea when I pitched the project. So, it's my prayer that he finds it worthy of *The Asbury Journal*. Of course, the biggest thank-you must go to Professor Strawn, who allowed SECSOR to highlight his work. I hope that he looks back on the entire experience fondly.

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Fall, 2018

